

FOREWORD

In the late summer of 1992, Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Merrill A. McPeak asked me to chair a panel to study the role of the Air Force in space into the 21st century. This second Blue Ribbon Panel on space, which came four years after a similar study completed in the late 1980s, had as its primary objectives to conduct a comprehensive review of the Air Force's existing space policy, organization, and infrastructure, to define the service's future role in space, to develop a strategy to carry out that role, and to make appropriate recommendations to the senior leadership of the Air Force. The Chief believed recent political, military, and economic developments necessitated a new look at military space operations. These included the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the emergence of a "multi-polar" world, a shift in national security strategy, the implications of Operation Desert Storm, and the worldwide proliferation of sophisticated weapons. Changing domestic priorities, declining defense budgets, and Congressional interest in military roles and missions also contributed to the need for an evaluation of the development, acquisition, and operation of space systems. Our panel, which consisted of some thirty Air Force officers and civilians, met at Maxwell Air Force Base from early September to early November 1992. Early the following year the Chief approved and released a report of our findings and recommendations.

Among our recommendations was one that called for making "integrated aerospace employment a fundamental principle...in all training and education

programs.” We urged the Air Force to examine all of its training, education, and personnel policies to develop a comprehensive approach to teaching space to the aviation community, and conversely, introducing space personnel to the principles and requirements of more traditional air warfare. This book represents a major step toward fulfilling the first of these two goals.

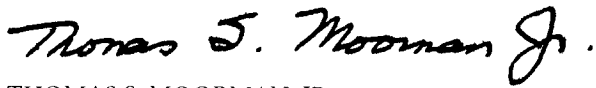
In the aftermath of the panel’s report I asked Dr. Richard Hallion, the Air Force Historian, to add a history of the Air Force in space to his program’s book-writing plans. Subsequent discussions of the project led to a decision to produce the study through a contract let by Air Force Space Command’s Directorate of History. Since contracting out such studies was a familiar practice in the Air Force History Program, it promised to give us an academic-quality book in a reasonable amount of time. Mr. George W. “Skip” Bradley, Director of History at Air Force Space Command, led the team which ultimately selected Dr. Dave Spires to write the study.

Beyond Horizons is by no means the first attempt to tell the story of the Air Force in space, although it may be first to present that story to a wide audience, both within the service and in the general public. Official organizational histories and monographs prepared by the civilian and blue-suit historians of the Air Force History Program have recorded and documented the evolution of the service’s space programs since their earliest days in the post-World War II era. Classification issues and the nature of the history program itself, however, limited readers of these works primarily to those already well aware of the Air Force space story or to the actual participants in these efforts. Perhaps of greater importance, the way the Air Force organized and managed its space effort created an environment somewhat detached and insulated from the mainstream flying Air Force. As a result, knowledge of this vital part of the service’s history and heritage remained closeted and to a certain extent inaccessible to both service members and scholars of Air Force history. It was my intention in requesting the preparation of this study to open up the story of the Air Force in space to a much wider audience and by doing so to generate a level of interest in the subject area that would result in additional, more focused monographs and papers.

The publication of *Beyond Horizons* comes at a significant point in the history of the Air Force, one with implications well beyond the coincident recognition of the service’s 50th anniversary. Recently the service announced its vision for the Air Force of the 21st century. Central to this vision, the leadership of today’s Air Force agrees, is a transition from an *air* force to an *air and space* force on an evolutionary path to a *space and air* force. Clearly, as the service moves in this direction over the coming years, awareness of the roots of the Air Force’s space heritage must increase and broaden. For service members, the transition necessitates a greater appreciation of this part of our history to foster an understanding of the changes currently taking place or emerging on the horizon. Scholars of Air Force history and others in the

public at large similarly will gain insights into issues and events either minimized or omitted from mainstream Air Force history.

Beyond Horizons promises to open the door somewhat wider to a story that to date has, for various reasons, not received the attention it deserves and requires. Unquestionably, the growing availability of official records from the earlier years of the Air Force space program will allow researchers to fill in details missing from this study and offer new interpretations of some issues and events. As the Air Force moves into its second half century, this added knowledge, together with what we already know from the work of Dave Spires and others, can only help us understand better the foundation upon which the Air Force of the 21st century is emerging.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas S. Moorman Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

THOMAS S. MOORMAN, JR.

General, USAF

Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force